



PREVENTION TALK

TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE OR THE WORLD OF WORK

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While they may yearn for independence and freedom, moving away from home for the first time, without parental supervision, is a major transition for 17- and 18-year olds. Substance abuse, particularly with alcohol, remains a major public health problem for college populations. When young adults leave the educational environment, enter the work force and/or marry, they again confront new challenges and stressors that may place them at risk for alcohol and other drug abuse in their adult environments.¹

Mothers and fathers are making a transition to a new aspect of parenting too. Teens say they neither need nor want their relationship to become distant, but rather to become different, honoring and accommodating their new capabilities and responsibilities.² During this time of change, it is important for parents to continue to communicate and model your family position on alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Encouragement by parents to pursue meaningful involvement in work or school can become a protective factor against substance abuse. College wellness

REMEMBER:

Your guidance, support, and flexibility helps with the transition to adulthood.

programs are proactively addressing substance abuse on campuses and parental involvement can play a key role in keeping communication about this issue open.

Teachers and counselors take responsibility for exposing middle school students to a range of career and work options, and during high school, students do more intensive work on future plans. Seniors in some high schools must write a post-graduation plan, with details of work, vocational, or college pursuits.

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Parents might use this and other opportunities to teach about decision making, reasoning, and learning from mistakes. Now is the time for parents to transition to more of a sounding board and start to let go of giving directives. According to several studies, teens view their parents as the best source of information and guidance on serious life issues, and rate not having enough time with their parents as their top concern.³

THINK ABOUT:

- What are the policies, consequences, and support services regarding substance use at the college and/or employer for your son or daughter?
- Many colleges offer an array of transition resources for both students and parents. Which of these services might be useful for your family?
- Socialization takes on a new dimension; the peer context is rich with new possibilities as students with common interests are more concentrated.

ACTION STEPS:

- Whenever the opportunity arises, reinforce your expectations about substance use, and give recognition for following the family values at home or away.
- Although they are out of the house, college students and young adults in the work force are still part of the family, keep them informed and involved!

For more information call:

SOURCES:

¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2003). National Institute on Drug Abuse: Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide for Parents, Educators, and Community Leaders, Second Edition (NIH Publication No. 04-4212(A)). Bethesda, MD: Author.

²Simpson, A.R. (2001). *Raising teens: A synthesis of research and foundation for action*. Boston: Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health.

³U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMSHA's National Mental Health Information Center. Helping your children navigate their teenage years: A guide for parents. Retrieved on January 29, 2005 from <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/SVP-0013/SVP-0013ch1.asp>